

Tech Conference Speaking:

Abstracts & CFPs & Organisation

Oh My

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FOR LOVE OF DOG, START YOUR TIMER

Go around the room and ask everyone:

- ^ * Name

- ^ * Area of interest (FOSS projects)

- ^ * Speaking experience

About me

VM (Vicky) Brasseur

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2

Open source policy & strategy freelancer. If your company needs help with open source compliance, contributions, or anything else, I'm the gal for you.

Author & community moderator for
opensource.com

I'm also a very frequent speaker at tech conferences and the founder of the Public_Speaking resource repository and Freenode community

Here's my contact information. I encourage you to use it.

Slides

<https://archive.org/details/20171222-speakertraining>



Resources

https://github.com/vmbrasseur/Public_Speaking



Community

[#public_speaking](#) on Freenode

These slides are already available, both with and without speaker notes

This is a github repo of dozens of resources for learning how to be a better conference speaker. Contributions welcome.

I'll show both of these URLs again at the end, so you don't have to grab them now

Now, let's set up some expectations. What am I going to cover today?

TOC

1. Audience
2. Writing a good talk abstract
3. Intermission
4. Finding conferences & CFPs
5. Tracking/organising conferences & CFPs
6. Organising proposals, presentations, & related materials
7. Rejection 🥲

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4

Here's what we'll be covering today.

Things will move pretty quickly, and we'll have a short break in the middle.



Please hold questions for
slides which look like this.

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5

There are many of these slides scattered throughout the training, plus hopefully there'll be time at the end for more questions.

I won't be able to see the chat while I'm presenting, so please hold all your questions until the question slides then ask them verbally.

Also, please keep your mic muted until it's question time.



Audience

We'll get into the details of what makes for a good talk abstract in a moment, but first I need to cover something very important...

AUDIENCE IS KEY!

Each event has its own unique audience. Even similar events (like DevOps Days) will each still have their own specific audiences.

Different audiences! Different needs!
Different angles & approaches!

When working on your proposal and on your talk, there is no one size fits all.

It's about value to the audience

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8

Speaking isn't about you. It's not about your company. It's about providing value to the audience.

If you provide value to the audience, that will reflect well on you and on your company

If you just treat every audience like the same audience, they'll know and they'll resent it

"Oh, they're just phoning it in. I, as an audience member, don't feel special at all."

The audience chooses
based on your abstract

Programme committee may have more information they can use to judge (your past talks, other fields on the proposal), but the audience only has your abstract. Therefore your abstract must clearly state to the audience what it will get out of investing its time in seeing your talk.

No, your talk is not
"for everyone"
(probably)

If you think this is the case, odds are very good you haven't thought through your content very well

How you present the material will be different for an audience of product managers than for an audience of webdevs

Learn who your audience is, then craft an abstract which speaks to them

How to learn about the audience

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11

So how do you get this
information?

Conference organisers

If you're very lucky, the conference organisers have provided audience profile information on the CFP page.

If they haven't contact them and politely ask for the information.

They need to provide this info to potential sponsors, so they definitely have it.

Sponsorship prospectus

That's because they need it for the sponsorship prospectus.

If you don't have time to wait for a response from the organisers, check the sponsorship prospectus for audience information.

Past editions of the event

Check social media to see who was posting about the event in the past.

These people are your audience.

Looking at past schedules can tell you a lot about what the organisers think the audience want to hear, from which you can infer a lot about your audience.

But, really, asking the organisers for this information is your best bet.

What to look at when learning about the audience

- *Role at the company/project*
- *Experience level*
- *Spoken language*
- *Recent challenges or developments in their area*

It's rare you'll get just one answer for any of these points, but that's OK.

Try to determine the most common/likely answer and use that



Questions about audience?



Characteristics of a good talk abstract

OK, now let's talk about some
of the characteristics of a good
talk abstract

Succinct

Make it easy for the audience & they'll like you for it

Don't ramble on

Immediately get to the point of the talk

Keep it short and easy to skim

Drop any extraneous detail or exposition

Remember, you don't have much room on that conference schedule. Make the most use of it.

Complete

Economy of words doesn't mean just to use fewer words. It means to use what you have more effectively.

Cover everything you need in the small space you have

Accurate

Don't bait & switch

List precisely what you will cover

The abstract is a promise you're making to your audience. Don't break your promise by writing an abstract which sets up expectations you don't intend to (or can't) fulfill.

Applicable

To the audience, to the conference
The audience should be able to
use the information

Proposing to teach WebAssembly
to a room full of ops folks is
probably not a good idea

Well-founded

Don't propose subjects you're not qualified to present

For instance, don't propose a talk on mental health unless you are a mental health professional or have studied enough to do so.

For instance, don't propose a talk on licenses if you don't have the training or experience to understand the law which underpins it...in that specific country

ALWAYS LIST AUDIENCE TAKE-AWAYS

"By the end of this talk audience members will be able to..."

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23

Don't make the audience guess what they will learn in your session.

Be very explicit

Answer this question with succinct bullet points

When I'm on conference program committees, I vote down any talk which does not include this.

Description vs. Abstract

Abstract: Full details

Description: Elevator pitch

You'll never know what sort of fields will be on a CFP form, but it's pretty common to see "Description" and "Abstract." Or "short description" and "long description" or some such.

The "Description" (short version) is often the thing which appears in mouse-over text on conference schedules.

It needs to be enticing yet representative of your talk

I advise you write your abstract first

Can then base the short version on the longer one.

Leads to consistency in content, voice, etc.



Questions about the characteristics of a good abstract?

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25

In a moment we'll talk about the mechanics of writing a good abstract.

But before we talk about putting them all together, are there any questions about these characteristics?



Writing a **good** talk abstract

Bottom line: Writing is hard, and writing which is meant to persuade is very hard indeed.

That's why it's so important you know the audience up-front: If you don't know whom you're persuading to accept and see your talk, you're unlikely to convince them to give you the chance to speak.

A proposal framework

1. Introductory paragraph (a couple sentences)
2. Detail paragraph
3. Bulleted list of audience takeaways
 - "By the end of this talk audience members will be able to..."
4. Supporting/closing paragraph (if needed)

If you take nothing else away from this training, please take this proposal framework.

More than one way to do it, but start here until you're more skilled/experienced.

It can really help you frame your abstract if you're struggling to put it together.

Start filling in each section then iterate

Experienced free and open source contributors take a lot of terms and concepts for granted, but these things are a foreign language to first time contributors.

While each project has its own special terminology and concepts, this talk will introduce the ones most commonly found in all types of free and open source projects. This will help newcomers to FOSS feel more welcome and comfortable, giving them a better chance at a successful contribution.

This talk will introduce:

- * The different ways to contribute (it's not all about the code)
- * Common files and what to do with them
- * Contributor License Agreement/Developer Certificate of Origin
- * Issue tracking
- * Common communication routes
- * Common project and community roles

By the end of this talk new contributors should feel much more comfortable navigating free and open source projects, feeling more like a native than a tourist.

Target directly at
that **specific** audience

Mostly management? Tone down the tech jargon & focus on business value

Mostly tech operators/developers? Tone down the business speak & focus on benefits to stability, security, etc.

Mostly senior tech folks? Go deep w/your abstract & content.

Mostly earlier in their tech careers? Drop the jargon or explain it as you go.

Gauge your audience and adjust your abstract appropriately.

Never do a sales pitch

Unless you're in a legit sales situation, never ever ever do a sales pitch in your abstract or your talk

Abstracts by a person from a company & promoting that company's products (even if open source) are "pitch-y."

Pitch-y talks are usually rejected.

If speaking about a company project, instead focus on the problem to be solved. Include alternative solutions.

Rarely a need for bona fides

“Scooby is a core contributor on 87 different projects and really knows what they’re talking about.”

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31

Some new speakers will put a paragraph in their abstract which says something like this.

Don't do that. It wastes space and isn't necessary. That's what speaker bios are for.

Plus it makes it very difficult for conferences to do blind proposal reviews.

People are coming for your content, not for you.

Your bona fides are that you proposed a great talk which people want to hear.

Anything else can go in your bio.

Address a problem

→ *DON'T*

→ "This talk will introduce you to the new framework."

→ *DO*

→ "This talk will tell you how to troubleshoot that problem and suggest possible solutions."

Don't talk about the concept or the tech

Talk about the problem the concept or the tech helps the audience solve

Again: know your audience. Webdevs have different problems than sysadmins than scrum masters than CTOs.

Only talk about the problems your audience will care about

Keep it brief

Audience members don't want to read a novel for each possible talk (and neither does the programme committee)

Allowed abstract length will vary.

Aim for between 100-150 words, max

If you exceed 200 words, you probably have a lot of unnecessary stuff in there

Have your friends, colleagues review & edit

Bullet points are your friend

- Easy
- To
- Skim

Avoid too many large blocks of text

Pull important information out into bullet points

Makes it very easy for the audience members to skim & see whether this is something they want to see

Use an informative & snappy title

No clickbait

Don't try to be clever if you're not good at that

Be careful with jokes (easy to offend folks, or for people not to understand the joke)

Tell the audience up-front what they're in for

Keep it short

Good titles (from 2017 North Bay Python)

- *Loop better: a deeper look at iteration in Python* by Trey Hunner
- *Stumbling Through Django and How Not To* by Melanie Crutchfield
- *Call C code quickly and compatibly with CFFI* by Zack Voase
- *Nutshell in a Python: Adapting patterns from shell scripts* by Brett Smith
- *5 Leadership Skills Every Engineer Needs* by Kathleen Vignos

As you read each of these titles, you have a very good sense of what the talk is going to be about

Bad titles (no naming, no shaming)

- *They're Watching You*
- *Open Panel Forum*
- *How to train your HAL 9000*
- *Devices & Appliances*

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37

<!-- Bryan Lunduke, LFNW 2017 -->

<!-- LFNW 2017 -->

<!-- Aaron Chantrill, LFNW 2017 -->

<!-- Wes Morgan, SELF 2017 -->

These are all very vague. You read them and am not entirely sure what you'd be in for were you to attend one of these talks

Examples of good abstracts

Abstract, not proposal, as the proposal probably includes a lot of fields we can't see

Loop better: a deeper look at iteration in Python by Trey Hunner

What's the difference between an iterable, an iterator, and a generator? Do you know how to create infinitely long iterables? Come to this talk to learn some of Python's slightly more advanced looping techniques.

Iterables are a very big deal in Python and they became even more important in Python 3. There's quite a bit beyond the basics when it comes to loops and looping in Python. Let's learn some of Python's slightly more advanced looping techniques!

In this session, we'll take a step back and learn about how looping actually works in Python. We'll then learn about a number of Python looping techniques that you've probably overlooked.

We'll learn about the difference between sequences, iterables, and iterators. We'll also reveal the iterator protocol that powers `for` loops in Python.

After we learn the basics, we'll learn some techniques for working with infinite iterables, generators, and generator expressions.

Attendees will walk away from this session with specific actionable recommendations for refactoring their own code as well as a wealth of new topics to look deeper into after the session.

Stumbling Through Django and How Not To by Melanie Crutchfield

If you're a beginner about to embark on a new Django project adventure, this talk is for you.

When I started my first Django project, I took the "Sure, I think I can figure that out" approach, which is fun! And also dangerous. But exciting! And also horrible because I caused myself a lot of trouble and barfed on my keyboard. (Metaphorically.) Oops.

My hope for this talk is to pass along lessons I learned the hard way, and save the world. Or at least prevent some frustration. :)

We'll talk about:

- version control
- structuring your project
- and how to handle top secret stuff.

We'll also talk about:

- throwing house parties without causing anaphylaxis
- pregnant daddy seahorses
- velociraptors
- and friends.

I promise all of that is related to Django.



Questions about writing abstracts?

INTERMISSION



Finding conferences and CFPs

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43

OK, so you want to present, but how do you find these conferences?

I gotta be honest with you, 2017 was not a good year for conference & CFP finding resources.



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There used to be a very good website for searching for conferences, but, alas, it has now died.



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There used to be a very good mailing list for telling you which conferences were happening, but it's now on hiatus, perhaps permanently. So what do you do?

Alas, it's a very manual process

There's no one place to go to find these things

It requires paying attention as well as creating a tracking mechanism

I'll talk about tracking conferences & CFPs in a bit, but first let me give you some of the best resources for finding out about conferences.

opensource.com Events Calendar

<https://opensource.com/resources/conferences-and-events-monthly>

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47

I'm not just saying this because I'm an author & moderator for opensource.com

It's legitimately one of the best places to find conferences opensource.com receives 1.1 million visitors a month, so there are a lot of people looking at and contributing to this thing, and they're coming from all corners of the tech world It's community-driven (though moderated), so you can add conferences to it please do!)

However, because it's community-driven, it also means it only has the events people have thought to contribute. It isn't comprehensive (but nothing is).

Papercall.io

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48

Also community driven (you can add events)

Allows you to limit by events with open CFPs, or which offer travel assistance

Can set up searches as email alerts, which is quite handy

Looks like it's trying to evolve into Lanyrd 2.0

Worth keeping your eye on this one

@CallbackWomen

Focused on increasing
diversity of tech speakers

Boosts the signal on
conferences and CFPs

If you do the Twitter thing, this
is a good one to follow

Your communities (including other speakers)

If you're participating in FOSS communities, ask them which conferences they're excited about.

If you know conference speakers, ask which conferences they have on their radar.

You can learn about a lot of really interesting community events this way.

And don't forget about **local meetups!**

Meetups in your area are not only a great way to practice new talks, they're a good place for meeting people you might not otherwise.

Ask them what conferences they've liked or that they want to attend.

And, if you travel for a conference, try to carve out some time to seek out local meetups and maybe present there as well.

This is great grassroots advocacy and will reach a lot of people you wouldn't usually get the chance to see or speak to.



Questions about finding conferences?

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52

These are the most effective ways of turning up new conferences, but there are others listed on that Public Speaking URL I showed at the start of the training (and will show again later). Now, before I move on to how to keep all these conferences & CFPs straight: Any questions?



Tracking and organising conferences & CFPs

It doesn't help if you come across a conference or CFP only to lose it again

It also doesn't help if the way the team shares these things is only via email or chat

You need a way to track and organise all of these conferences and CFPs

The situation with devrel/dev advocate software tools...

...is pretty grim.



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54

There are very few tools out there dedicated to helping conference speakers and speaking teams coordinate

If you know of some which aren't listed here, I'd be grateful if you could share them during Q&A for this section (not right now).

EvMan

- Open source (Apache v2.0)
- Hosted service available
- Shared across the team
- Track speaker images, bios, calendars
- Next to no documentation
- *I would not recommend it*

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55

I was able to find this one, but I was not impressed

This is a half-baked work-in-progress FOSS project

Might do what you need, but the effort to get it there would be high

Actually, let's start there...

What do you need in a tracking tool?

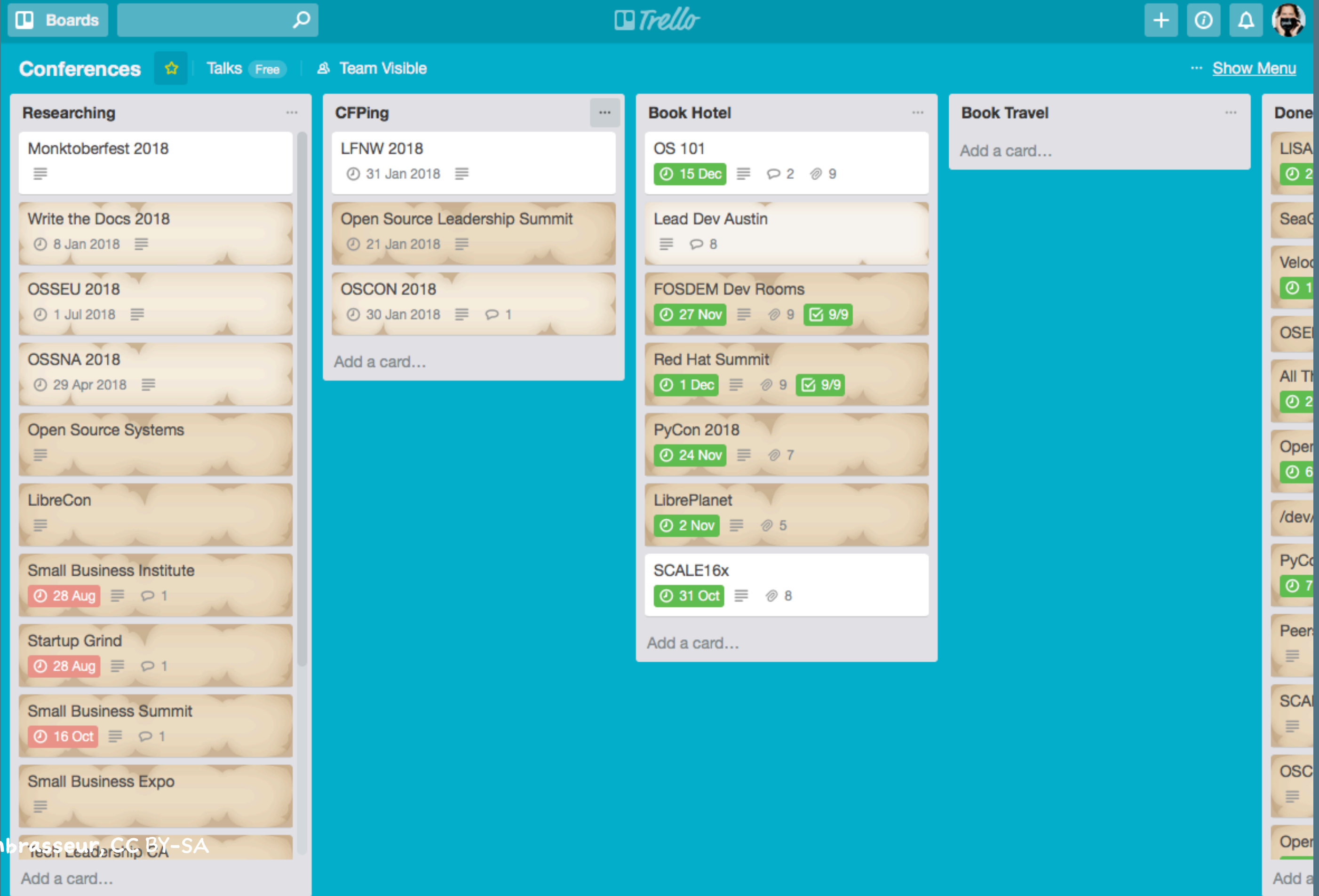
- Conference info
 - Conference dates
 - Conference location
 - CFP deadline
 - Link for more information (or to the CFP)
- Share across a team
- Perhaps even track what proposals were submitted & by whom
- Free (or easy to convince purchasing to approve)

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56

While you're just getting started, you don't want to invest too much until you can get a handle on the long-term needs of the team

Instead, I recommend a readily-available and free tool



Trello. This is a screencap of the current state of my own Trello board for tracking conferences

Easily supports teams

Easily supports due dates

Can even attach files (like the proposals which you submitted to the conference)

Totally Free

Many integration points, should you need them

A tool doesn't matter
if the process **stinks**

Having a tool doesn't help if you don't use it
Whatever tool you select, checking and
updating it must become a regular part of your
team's workflow

I don't know your workflow and can't
recommend how to fit a tool into it

Perhaps making sure checking the tool is a
part of your regular team meetings?

Do what makes most sense for your team



Questions about tracking and organising conferences and CFPs?



Organising proposals, presentations,
& related materials

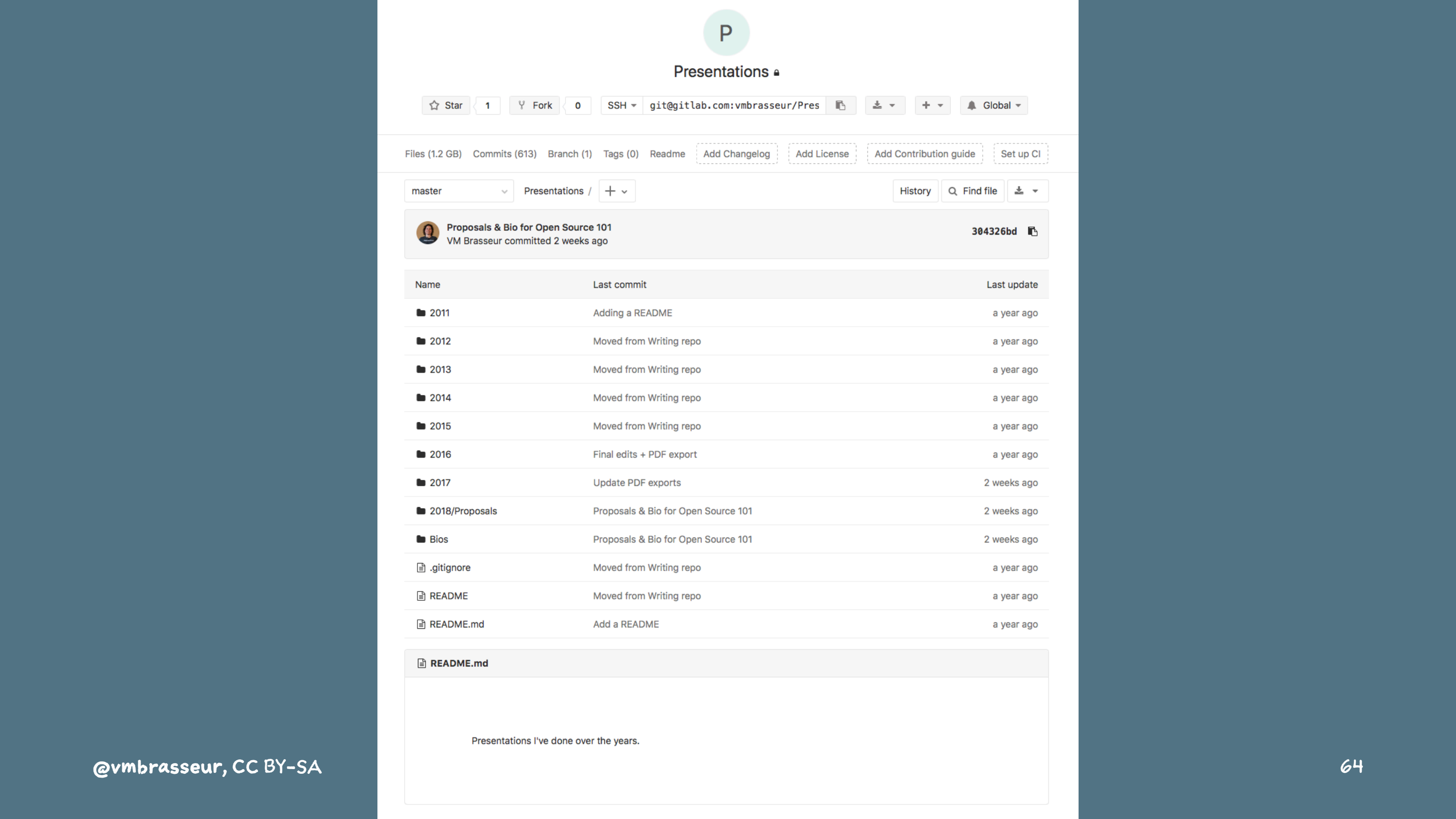
We've talked about tracking and organising your conferences and CFPs, but what about the stuff you actually write?

What do you do with all of that stuff?

What do you do
with
all that stuff?

How do you
keep it **safe**
and
easy to find?

While still
enabling
collaboration?




C'mon, people. We're in tech.
Put this stuff into version control, for crying
out loud.
This is my Presentations repo on GitLab.
I'll walk you through it, but note that this is
just a suggestion. Your team will likely need a
different organisation strategy, but should still
consider committing all of the same things.

VM Brasseur > Presentations > Repository

master

Presentations / 2017 / +

LockHistoryQFind file📁



Update PDF exports

VM Brasseur committed 2 weeks ago

210b5f94📄

Name	Last commit	Last update
..		
📁 ATO/drivethru	ATO slides	a month ago
📁 ConFoo	Slides for upload	9 months ago
📁 DevWorld/speakertraining	Exports	3 months ago
📁 FLOSS-UK/keynote	Exported slides	9 months ago
📁 LCA	Add PDF	11 months ago
📁 LISA	Add a note that comments are not welcome	a month ago
📁 NBP/speakertraining	Update PDF exports	2 weeks ago
📁 OReilly	Copy a bunch of files	8 months ago
📁 OSCON/succession_planning	OSCON slide PDFs	7 months ago
📁 OSEN/emergingmarket	Final changes and PDF exports	3 months ago
📁 OSSNA/drivethru	Remove stuff after practice	3 months ago
📁 OpenWest	Final for OpenWest	5 months ago
📁 PDXDevOps/Failure	Slide exports	7 months ago
📁 PDX_Linux/businessofcommunity	Rename directory	11 months ago
📁 PeersConf/management	Add no comments to Q&A speaker notes	7 months ago
📁 Proposals	Proposal for the Symphony Foundation event	3 months ago
📁 PyConAU	Add credits formatting	4 months ago
📁 SCaLE/succession_planning	Slides to upload to IA	9 months ago
📁 SeaGL	Files for the 2017 party	2 months ago
📁 Velocity/VelocityEngineering	Copy Velocity files over	2 months ago
📁 WtDPDX/IA	Updates for WtD PDX presentation	6 months ago

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65

Each event receives its own directory.

Each directory contains the specific version of the talk (or talks) I presented at that event.

A similar effect could be accomplished using directories for talks then branches for each conference where the talk is presented

The important part is that a talk is an evolving thing. Being able to track that evolution is very helpful

Question:
What should you commit to the repo?

Which actually brings up a good question. During the process of creating your presentation, what should you commit to the repo?

Answer: EVERYTHING

- Presentation files
- Example code
- Images used in the presentation
- Video/audio (if your provider allows it)
- Everything

YES, even images

These can disappear very easily
Hard to re-use later if you can't
find them

Can allow you to track the
source and license of each
image very easily

VM Brasseur > Presentations > Repository

master


Presentations / 2017 / Velocity / orienteering / images /

+

Lock

History












Find file



Copy Velocity files over

VM Brasseur committed 2 months ago

45f68012

Name	Last commit	Last update
..		
 CC.BY Boring Meeting by MrBigCity on Flickr.jpg	Copy Velocity files over	2 months ago
 CC.BY Girl Scout Day Camp by Peter and Joyce Grace ...	Copy Velocity files over	2 months ago
 CC.BY Girl Scouts, circa 1940s_by Seattle Municipal Ar...	Copy Velocity files over	2 months ago
 CC.BY Girls Hiking in Aspens Mosca Pass by Great San...	Copy Velocity files over	2 months ago
 CC.BY IMG_0714 by Nicola on Flickr.jpg	Copy Velocity files over	2 months ago
 CC.BY Roslyn_cat by ocean yamaha on Flickr.jpg	Copy Velocity files over	2 months ago
 CC.BY Welcome by garryknight on Flickr.jpg	Copy Velocity files over	2 months ago
 CC.BY Youths from a Soul River Inc deployment to the ...	Copy Velocity files over	2 months ago
 CC.BY daddy and the girls by Anatahea Utley on Flickr....	Copy Velocity files over	2 months ago
 CC.BY Ily the trail blazer by Alison Squiers Photograph...	Copy Velocity files over	2 months ago
 CC BY-Compass by Maxim Kulikov-The Noun Project	Copy Velocity files over	2 months ago

@vmbr

69

Name the file with the license, the source, and the creator name

Makes copyright questions very simple to answer

Makes it easy to attribute the images

Also, provides the information needed if you ever need to find the original image again

Don't underestimate how useful this will be. Trust me, if you do a fair bit of public speaking you will never regret committing images in this way.

And don't forget to commit your proposals

A fact which comes as a surprise to many new public speakers in tech is that they **SHOULD** present their talks multiple times.

Reach a larger audience this way.


Allows you to refine and improve the talk.













But you can't really present a talk multiple times if you don't **PROPOSE** it multiple times.

Committing your proposals makes this much easier.

VM Brasseur > Presentations > Repository

master Presentations / 2017 / Proposals / + Lock History Find file

 **Proposal for the Symphony Foundation event** 598bc8ff
VM Brasseur committed 3 months ago

Name	Last commit	Last update
..		
 ato-bizofcommunity.txt	ATO 2017 stuff	8 months ago
 ato-drivethru.txt	ATO 2017 stuff	8 months ago
 ato-fail.txt	ATO 2017 stuff	8 months ago
 ato-successionplanning.txt	ATO 2017 stuff	8 months ago
 cls-privilege.txt	Meh. I guess it'll do	10 months ago
 cls-winning.txt	First draft of Winning CLS keynote proposal	10 months ago
 confoomontreal-bizofcommunity.txt	ConFoo proposals & Bio	a year ago
 confoomontreal-mgmt.txt	ConFoo proposals & Bio	a year ago
 confoomontreal-remote.txt	ConFoo proposals & Bio	a year ago
 devxcon-bizofcommunity.txt	Add proposals & bios for DevxCon & OpenW...	8 months ago
 devxcon-drivethru.txt	Add proposals & bios for DevxCon & OpenW...	8 months ago
 devxcon-successionplanning.txt	Add proposals & bios for DevxCon & OpenW...	8 months ago

You put a lot of work into that abstract. Why would you use it only once?

Here are a few of my proposals from 2017. You can see that some of them make multiple appearances, even on this small piece of the complete list.

Why save a different version for each conference?

Because different CFPs ask for different things

TITLE:
The Business of Community

DESCRIPTION:
In this talk, I'll look at community from a business perspective, including the effect community can have on an organisation's bottom line. Although there are communities everywhere, I'll approach the topic—meaning, communities, their members, and their contributors—from a free/open source perspective. |

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TITLE:
The Business of Community

DESCRIPTION:
In this talk, I'll look at community from a business perspective, including the effect community can have on an organisation's bottom line. Although there are communities everywhere, I'll approach the topic—meaning, communities, their members, and their contributors—from a free/open source perspective.

ABSTRACT:
While community management and developer relations are gaining acceptance, many companies still don't know how these efforts can benefit not only the communities of the open source projects on which their business relies but also their productivity and profitability.

In this talk, I'll look at community from a business perspective, including the effect community can have on an organisation's bottom line. Although there are communities everywhere, I'll approach the topic—meaning, communities, their members, and their contributors—from a free/open source perspective.

In this talk I'll cover:

- * Business reasons for supporting a community
- * Metrics for gauging community management success from the business' perspective
- * Getting started in community management
- * Risks of community management

TAKEAWAY:
The audience will learn:

- * Business reasons for supporting a community
- * Metrics for gauging community management success from the business' perspective
- * Getting started in community management
- * Risks of community management

72

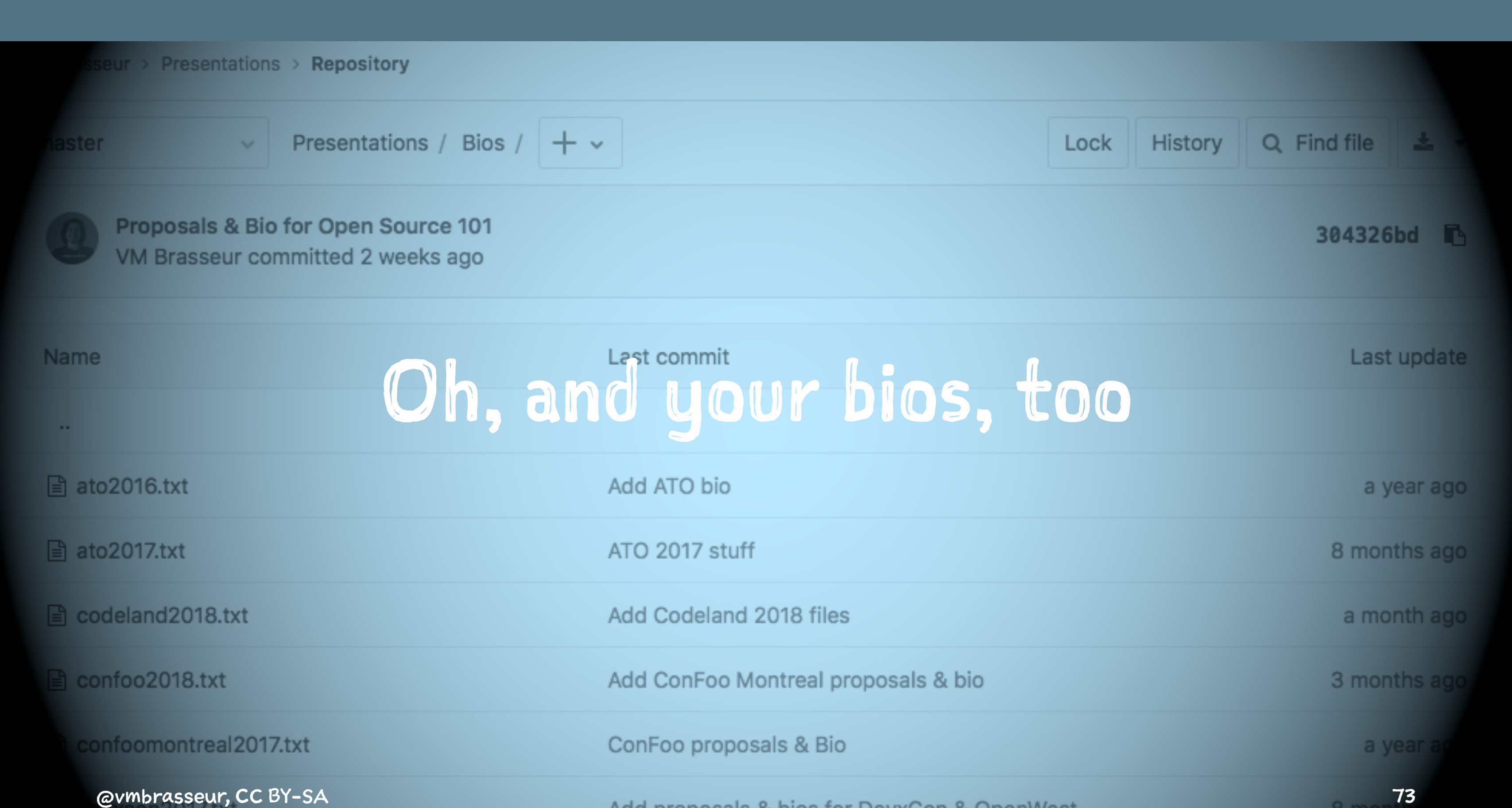
On the left is a proposal for ConFoo in Montreal
On the right is a proposal for the same talk but at
OSCON

Tracking the different versions allows me to repurpose
the proposal in different ways as needed.

It also means I can check in on what I actually proposed.

Not all conferences allow you to view your proposals
after they're submitted, especially if they use Google
Forms for their CFP tool.

This way I can still see what I submitted.



For various reasons, you may use different bios in different places

If nothing else, it can be interesting to look back & see how you described yourself.

This came in handy for me recently: A conference changed my bio. I was able to point at my committed version and say, "No, that's not what I gave you. Please return it to normal."

So you never know how you'll use this stuff

YMMV

This organisation works for me. It will probably not be right for a team of several people.

Consider the team needs & requirements beforehand and design the repo which is right for you.

However, I do encourage you to consider committing all these types of files in some way.



Questions about organising proposals, presentations, and related materials?

Rejection 🥲

If you're going to be playing
the CFP game, you're going to
have your proposals rejected.
A LOT.

☁️ 86 proposals submitted in 2017

🤔 22 accepted

💔 That's a 25% acceptance rate

Here's my scorecard for 2017
That's a whoooooole lot of rejection
But what's the goal here? Is it to get
EVERYTHING accepted? Or to
speak at the event?
So let's take a different perspective
on the numbers...

☁️ Proposed to 22 events in 2017

🤔 Spoke at 18 events in 2017

💕 That's an 82% acceptance rate

If you look at it this way, it was
a really good year!

"...reacted to a negative interaction...
six times more strongly
than they reacted
to a positive interaction..."

<https://hbr.org/2013/03/the-delicate-art-of-giving-fee>

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79

Don't get me wrong: It's still an emotional hit to receive that rejection email (or a stack of them all at once).

It's just human nature, it seems.

Studies show that for each negative thing, we need 5-6 positive things to offset it.

But keeping the goal-speaking at the conference at all—front and center helps immensely.

Change the story

Not: "Drat, I had 4 talks rejected from SomeConf."

But: "Hey, I got a talk accepted! I'll be speaking at SomeConf!"

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80

It can be difficult, but try to focus on your wins.

What can make that easier is giving yourself a better chance of having a win in the first place

You're more likely to score with more shots on goal

Don't limit yourself to only one proposal per conference.

Submit as many as you wish (*or as many as the conference will allow, if they set a max*)

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81

If you have three talk ideas which are all applicable to the conference's audience, submit three proposals

Five applicable talk ideas? Five proposals

This is accepted best practice on the conference circuit

Remember: If you do this and get all of your proposals accepted, you can tell the organisers you're only able to present one or two of them.

You don't HAVE to do them all.

#speakerlife

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82

It also can help to see that even very experienced conference speakers get rejected. It's not just you.

My friend Genehack has started this hashtag which a lot of speakers now use to share their rejections

New speakers have told us that it's very helpful for them to see that even seasoned and popular presenters receive those rejection emails.

So **why** are your talks being rejected,
anyway?

Another perspective which helps is that of the programme committee.

Why are they rejecting your talks?

There are many reasons, many of which have nothing at all to do with you.

This obviously isn't a complete list.

Limited number of talks for each speaker

If you propose several talks,
naturally some will be rejected

Many conferences have policies in
place to limit the number of talks any
one speaker may give at each event

This helps to make room for lots of
different speakers and perspectives

Multiple proposals on a similar topic

Particularly if your talk is on a topic which is currently very popular, it's likely to be rejected if it hasn't taken a unique and useful approach to the topic

Careful crafting of your idea and your abstract can help a lot here

Programme evolves to have other needs

Sometimes as the committee reviews proposals, it becomes obvious that the programme needs to go in a certain direction

In these cases, even though your proposal was a good fit for the stated requirements, it may no longer fit with the direction they're taking the conference.

There isn't really anything you can do about this.

Topic is good but targeted at the wrong audience

You may have an amazing proposal on computing at the edge, but if your abstract is talking about the technical nuts and bolts of it but your audience will primarily be on the business side of things...

It happens all the time: Conferences receive proposals which don't fit their audience.

Please take the time to do audience research before proposing.



It's just a bad proposal

And, sometimes, it's entirely your fault.
You misjudge the audience
You don't list any takeaways
You don't discuss any problems to solve
Your writing is horrible
PLEASE collaborate with your team and
have them review and edit your proposals.


You Won't Know
If You Don't Ask
For Feedback

Whatever the reason is for rejection,
you won't know

AND YOU WON'T IMPROVE

If you don't ask for feedback.

Events don't always have the
bandwidth to do this, but it never
hurts to ask (politely)



Questions about rejection?



Wrapping up

Slides

<https://archive.org/details/20171222-speakertraining>



Resources

https://github.com/vmbrasseur/Public_Speaking



Community

[#public_speaking](#) on Freenode

Now, any questions about
ANY of what I've just dumped
in your lap?